

A higher concept for ZOW Shanghai 2008

by IRENA JOSOEB in China

In September, ZOW Shanghai started its showcase in a new location amid much industry watch. *Panels & Furniture Asia* is there to catch the action and hear the talk amongst top-notch international suppliers at the JSWB Global Home Furnishings Centre on Sep 11-15, and bring to you this exclusive report.

ZOW in Shanghai, which took place in the JSWB Global Home Furnishings Centre for the first time in September 2008, may have been modest in size. But it showcased a selection of international supplier companies, including the likes of Hettich, Henkel, Huwil, Jowat, Moralt, Pfeiderer, Titusplus, Vauth Sagel and Ungricht and attracted a good 4,000 visitors to the JSWB in Shanghai during its five days of show on Sep 11-15, while continuing to be a trendsetter within the sector with its innovative range of products.

The 200,000-sqm JSWB Global Home Furnishings Centre is situated in the west of Shanghai city (Puxi) and is close to the Hongqiao Domestic Airport. Known for being a direct selling centre in China, it also hosted the JSWB Shanghai Furniture Sourcing Fair at the same location at the same time.

While the show atmosphere this year is comparatively calmer – a welcome change from the fast-paced and breakneck speed of other China industry exhibitions – it is definitely not without its attractions as it allows longer and better interactions between exhibitors and visitors and most importantly, an increased understanding of the products or concepts presented at each booth. Constant chatters of the crowd continues to fill the air especially around the snacks bar, as a consistent and even crowd flow was observed all through the exhibition days.

Mr Bernd Rademacher, Managing Director of Survey Marketing & Consulting (the Malaysian representative office in the organising of ZOW Shanghai) said this on the second last day of exhibition, “My overall expectations of this show have been met 80%, although in terms of visitors I would only rate it at 70%. However based on the feedback from exhibitors, with one exception, all of them are very happy with the quality of

the talks they were having.”

While he admitted that the visitor crowd “is not big crowd of course” he pointed out that the exhibition has managed to attract “exactly the right people”. Some of them even told me that they have better business than last year, which is a quite surprising in a way because there is a downturn in the market generally speaking. So we are quite happy with the results this year and expect double the visitor numbers next year,” he added.

An exhibitor, Mr Marcus Zylajew, Area Representative (Asia-Pacific) of Vauth-Sagel Systemtechnik confirmed Mr Rademacher’s observation: “The quality of customers are here and the ambience is nice. Since there are not that many exhibitors, we can talk in-depth with each customer with no competition.”

Another satisfied exhibitor is Mr Ralf Michael Gerigk, Plant & Sales Manager of German laminate-producer DTS, who flew in from Germany to exhibit at the ZOW Shanghai 2008: “It’s not about who I exhibit with, but who I meet at the show. I’m

CHINA ON THE CHANGE, AGAIN

“China is not the cheap furniture platform anymore; if you want to look for cheap furniture it might be better to go to Vietnam or Indonesia.”

- Mr Bernd Rademacher,
Managing Director of Survey Asia

“It’s now reported that China no longer wants to waste valuable raw materials to produce cheap products for which it floods the world, to get only trouble for money that is losing value. Now that makes so much sense.”

- Mr Peter Meyer,
CEO of Survey



The new location for ZOW Shanghai at JSWB

*Food storage solutions
Orgawing and
Orgatray, using
InnoTech drawer
system from Hettich*



*Arpa's pixel texture
in trend-setting blue
(lefthand side) and
mesh type texture
from the "i tattili"
collection for 2008, as
showcased in ZOW
Shanghai 2008*

glad that by the morning of the first exhibition day, we managed to set two appointments to visit machinery productions of two different manufacturers. We also aim to do technology transfer to agents while we're here in Shanghai. So it's not about whether it's 200 or 10 visitors we get, but how many quality discussions we have and yes, we have had many good discussions. Most of the queries are for our high-gloss, non-scratch and for chemical-stable laminates for laboratory-use."

Mr Volker Lange, Director of KD Feddersen Asia Pacific Representatives, which brings into Asia the brands DTS, Wodego, etc, added: "I come to meet real substance in this exhibition. Because this exhibition is not that big, we are able to focus on important people and get the business done. It's been an extremely successful exhibition for us as our designs and technology attract many, and we even had our first order in this show by the third day. The niche market in China is big, so we can do a professional niche marketing here."

A different approach for a new location

The organisers of ZOW Shanghai also did it a little differently this year by organising a lucky draw for visitors, for which eight lucky ones would win at trip to visit ZOW Bad Salzufflen (held next year on Feb 9-12), and to the German subsidiary of Material ConneXion in Cologne for its material exhibition.

Mr Peter Meyer, owner and CEO of Survey Marketing & Consulting said, "It is important to find new potentials or keep



*Mr Bernd Rademacher, Managing Director
of Survey Asia being interviewed onsite*

existing exhibitors, so we decided to invest much more in promotions than we ever did before, and we do everything possible to attract the visitors. We brainstormed and we put all ideas together, and we spend what-



Mr Peter Meyer, owner and CEO of Survey Marketing & Consulting, organiser of ZOW shows worldwide

Straight talking with... **Mr Meyer**

Panels & Furniture Asia gets it straight from the mouth of the quote-worthy Mr Peter Meyer, CEO of Survey, on his thoughts of moving ZOW Shanghai to a new location, and on the various ZOW movements at large.

Q: What are your first thoughts now that ZOW Shanghai has now moved to JSWB?

A (by Mr Peter Meyer): When I heard about JSWB two years ago as they started their promotions in Europe, I thought to myself, "This cannot be true what they are telling me." When I visited this place for first time for opening ceremony last year, there was nearly 200,000 sqm under one roof. I thought then: this is the real thing and the JSWB president Mr Zou Wenlong is a man of vision. He developed for the furniture-related industry a concept that is totally new but makes a lot of sense and that I too share his vision.

Hence, though it means we have to start from scratch by moving ZOW Shanghai here to JSWB, we are sitting on the right ship, so to speak. This is the ship of the future and I am happy ZOW can be here.

Q: Can you elaborate more on the common vision that you share with Mr Zou?

A: His vision is that one can never show furniture concept ranges of the manufacturers as perfectly as they need to be shown as in a permanent showcase. It gives a very strong impact in the regional market, from the business-to-customer point of view. On the other hand, such a platform is also the perfect platform for B2B. This is Mr Zou's vision and he puts in a beautiful and expensive architecture to showcase this.

As such, this is not merely one big hall; it is a city that is breathing design and presents a high level approach to markets. This is the new vision especially in a country like China; and a different strategy in introducing ZOW to the market. It also makes a lot of sense to have ZOW during this time where there are other furniture shows side-by-side complimenting our concept. I think it is a high concept and believe this is the way to do it in the future.

Q: But other than a common vision, what made you decide to move ZOW Shanghai to this location?

A: When we decided on this new venue, we knew that there

is of course a certain risk involved. However in my eyes it is better to decide on a new way that involves some risk than to continue to move forward in a dead-end street. And our partnership with the previous organiser had developed into a dead-end street. We could only get half of a hall which is not enough for us to break even as we have a different cost structure for ZOW shows, and we start to have profits only at a given price level and if we have a bigger space covered.

On other hand, the former organiser also could not accept that we would be doing another show somewhere else in China – our upcoming ZOW Shenzhen – and so during the time our contract was to be prolonged or extended, we had the option *not* to do it. When we said that we want to hold another show in Shenzhen then it's decided, we go. This is the background of how our move to a most challenging and also promising alternative in this new location in Dongguan came about.

Q: How has it been starting over with a new partner?

A: Survey has been doing ZOW in six different locations all over the world so our team is capable of adjusting to different environments; working with a new partner is not that problematic. We also have a handful of service providers that give us the stability factor. While being in a new location does put certain technical demands on us, but as you can see, the show is standing here now and looks like any other ZOW in the world.

Q: This is definitely a year of change for ZOW shows all over the world, how is Survey as a whole taking the change in their stride?

A: This year for us is a year of change. It's the 14th year we are doing ZOW. When we see that our environment is changing and yet if we are not willing to change ourselves – and any change is connected to risk – then we do not deserve to be called an entrepreneur.

Though USA's President-elect Barack Obama's stance on "change" is popular now, actually I think most of us deep in our hearts do not really like changes, because everything you have is what you know. And everything new is connected with

Straight talking with **Mr Meyer**

risk and so when things change from what you know to what you don't know, then you cannot be sure as to whether it will still work. So many people would rather not change.

But once in a while changing is necessary, even with all the risks involved. Hence I decided something has to change in what we are doing in Shanghai, knowing that there is something to change.

Likewise there is a need for change in our ZOW show in Spain, and also for the Moscow show. So it's better to do it all in once, to have one troublesome period for everybody instead of a giving ourselves a permanent pain of "this year we change this, next year we change something else". It is better to have the changes all at one go so that everything is clear and calm afterwards.

Also, outsourcing was a part of a development phase in our company. But now that we have reached a certain size to be able to afford to do it with our own people and staff, this move will make us more flexible and closer to our clients, like in Italy and Spain.

Q: How is the whole Survey organisation taking it, in

dealing it with the many changes?

A: It's tough, but people are motivated as I have a team with a good mix, with people in advanced ages like Mr Bernd Rademacher and myself (*chuckling*) but with also young people. Everybody is fighting hard and the majority accepts that the old guy – me – has made the right decision.

Q: How would ZOW now change in a changing world?

A: I think we don't have to change the basics of our concepts, for they have proven that they work.

But what I want – which is also one of the reason why I decide to cooperate with Material ConneXion – is so that we would not only be trade show organizers; after all we are all specialists in this industry too.

Personally, I am now 34 years in this industry and we want to contribute also in terms of content. So we are already some nice things for the next ZOW in Germany and they really should give food for thought to the industry. Likewise for the future ZOW Italy and ZOW Spain shows, we also want to increase to make our shows to be even more interesting and go beyond the exhibitor booths.



L-R: Mr Thomas Erhardt, Sales Director and Ms Jessie Bi, Sales Manager of KD Feddersen Asia Pacific Representatives Ltd, with Mr Ralf Gerigk, Plant & Sales Manager of DTS

ever is reasonable to promote this place. It's a critical factor that we have a reasonably good number and quality of visitors."

With 26 exhibitors at ZOW Shanghai this year as compared to last year's 165 when it was still held at Shanghai New International Expo Centre in Pudong, east of Shanghai, both Mr Rademacher and Mr Meyer however remained optimistic that it is the quality that counts.

Mr Rademacher said, "We have this same experience four years ago when we first started out in Shanghai, and then we only had 18 exhibitors! But once the Chinese companies know who had been here, they want to be the next ones to come too. We may start small, but each of our exhibition is top class."

A walk around the show this year also revealed that many of the participating names are indeed topnotch brands from Europe (such as Germany, France, Italy), bringing with them their own special brand of technology. Also spotted are a mix of other promising local Chinese companies featuring veneers, laminates and hardwares, etc, together with exhibitors from Japan and Hong Kong.

An interesting observation in this year's show is the increasing collaborations among brands in sharing one big well and uniquely presented exhibition booth, as opposed to just featuring one brand for a smaller booth. It certainly made sense for these complimentary suppliers to present their impactful

ON 2008: A YEAR OF CHANGES

"Everybody is fighting hard and the majority accepts that the old guy – me – has made the right decision."

- Mr Peter Meyer

possibilities through positive cooperations, and such a scenario will no doubt be an increasing trend that will feature more and more in other exhibitions in Asia.

Loyalty counts

When asked how the organiser has convinced big names to come the new ZOW Shanghai show, Mr Rademacher explained, "We have a very loyal clientele worldwide and it is like a hardcore group of people who are really supporting the idea of ZOW. We invited this group to attend the Shanghai show and so as you can see, we have the *crème de la crème* here, such as Pfeleiderer, Hettich, Henkel, DTS, etc, offering the top technology."

Addressing some reported ground sentiments that the current JSWB location is "too far" and that prices for a booth are too expensive for the location, Mr Meyer said, "It's actually not true that this place is far; however it is true that SNIEC is indeed far away from here!" pointing out that the current location is close to Hongqiao Domestic Airport, and is thus not far from the Chinese people "whom we are targeting".

He added: "Not to forget, the ZOW concept is a regional concept. While we are an international trade show organiser and we have international brands, in each single show, it is more or less aiming at the regional markets. So it is with our China shows."

The ZOW owner also shared that the price of a ZOW booth is standardised at all levels. "It is also not our concept not to mess around with prices as we give good and well-accepted service, starting from promotions to reception to help the exhibitors. And the price is in line with this service," he explained.

With the emergence of a show similar in concept to ZOW being also held in Shanghai at almost the same time, one wonders if this show will make any move to be a little different in face of competition, so to speak.

To this, Mr Meyer shared: "When I first started in the furni-



Henkel introduces at ZOW Shanghai 2008 its new range of adhesives after its merger with National Starch, such as PUR-Fect, Bondmaster, KOR-LOK, etc

Ungricht showcases pattern possibilities such as pine, red multiplex, American cherry, etc, with its roller and engraving technology from Germany



Vauth-Sagel Systemtechnik shows its DSA Rotary innovative solution for slanted base cabinets; this was first introduced in interzum cologne 2007 and comes in soft close

ture industries 34 years ago, my boss told me: 'Only good designs get copied.' And maybe now it is the same thing with concepts too: that only good concepts are copied!"

Chipping in is Mr Rademacher, "It is nice to be copied; if we are being copied it means we are on the right track."

Looking ahead

With regards to improvements for ZOW Shanghai next year, Mr Rademacher shared that transport "would always need improvement" and indicated that the organiser would work harder together to get more taxis available in the exhibition grounds during the evening peak-hours, after the exhibition is over. It may also cut down the show by one day as "five days are one day too many" and would ensure that "there is no public holiday around the show dates" like there was for this year's show.

SOUNDBITES from ZOW Shanghai 2008



Mr Birkland from Titusplus

Mr Dale Birkland, Sales Director of Titus+Lama+Huwil

"We want to be part of a representative group that brings new things into the industry and so help the industry mature. I can see that China is changing in that people now want quality and it's a fast maturing industry in China; they are now listening and they realise that they need to grow, hence I'm encouraged by what I see. In this show, we are especially introducing the E-Strato with sensor waves button."

Mr Luther Tang, Director of Perspective Development from Hong Kong which produces Unplugg panelboards using the EN designs, Panefri edgebands, etc:

"This show will attract foreigners and local suppliers as ZOW's reputation gives clients more confidence. The response has been not bad, with professionals from Canada, the US, Italy, Korea, and Singapore and also local suppliers



Mr Tang with Mr Akihide Fujita, Corporate Planning Manager of Panefri Industrial Co

from Shanghai and Beijing, here at the show with the purpose to purchase. At the end of the show, we hope to promote the EN concept of putting different components, quality, colours, designs; people not only go for quality but also design these days."



The EN concept of mixing and matching

Mr Ralph Aufderheide, Technical Area Sales Manager of Jowat AG

"We are introducing rollercoating with PUR hotmelt, and we are especially trying to introduce the use of PUR especially for particleboard or with aluminum core (fireproof) or sponge core. While this year's show is quieter than last year – where Chinese manufacturers at other shows also stop by at ZOW to see what they can improve on in terms of materials and components – this year we have had more time to talk with each customer and be engaged with more intensive talks."



Mr Aufderheide from Jowat



Hangzhou Hodin Decoration Materials showing their veneer range, including that for finger-jointed veneer

By next year, ZOW Shanghai also hopes to have a different hall location.

"I am not sure if the Phase 2 development of JSWB will be ready by next year, but we hope to be in a new and bigger hall. In the long run, we

hope to have a show space of 7,000-10,000 sqm, out of the 700,000 sqm JSWB will eventually have," said Mr Meyer.

And as for what lies ahead for ZOW in China, Mr Rademacher shared this on the second last day of the show: "My mind is now already looking towards our ZOW Shenzhen activities in March 2009. We are very optimistic

Senosan's high gloss surfaces for the furniture industry

CONSOLIDATION, BRANDING
"It's a good time to consolidate the market. There is also now a lot more focus on branding, with more small plants supporting the operations of one big plant."

- Mr Shie Wee Lim,
 Sales Director (China, Hong Kong) for
 Adhesive Technologies-Industrial division,
 National Starch & Chemical (Shanghai)

about what is happening here and we already have obtained bookings from our exhibitors here for the Shenzhen show; in fact we also have exhibitors from other material shows signing up for ZOW Shenzhen and saying, "We are coming to the real ZOW!"

The next ZOW shows in China are held next year in Shenzhen (see story on page 76), Mar 19-22 and in Shanghai, Sep 10-14. **PFA**



Duropol shows its elegant and fashionable printed wood effect texture at ZOW Shanghai